

Trustee Line – Current Issue

April 2020

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Thoughts From The Trustees – Current and Past

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The subjects listed below are themes that have been submitted by other Trustees. You may respond to any of them, or start an entirely new subject

Subjects that receive submissions from at least 13 different people, will trigger an email blast to all the current and past Trustees, signifying a ‘Hot Topic Alert’ on the Trustee Line.

Item	Subject	Last Entry	Entries
1.	<u>A Failed Attempt to Discredit the GA Approved Telephone Conference Call Platform</u>	04/02/20	1
2.	<u>Telephone Conference Calls on ISO Website</u>	04/12/20	4
3.	<u>Trustee Elections</u>	04/23/20	3
4.	=	-	-
5.	=	-	-

6.	=	-	-
7.	=	-	-
8.	=	-	-

1. A Failed Attempt to Discredit the GA Approved Telephone Conference Call

April 2, 2020 – 11:00am

This posting took a lot of consideration for me to even submit it to the Trustee Line. It involved numerous discussions with other Trustees, as to why I would even dignify the posting with such a lengthy item, the original item is riddled with distortions and incorrect statements. I decided that this subject is too important to allow it to go unchallenged by someone from the committee.

Having said that, I find the posting from last month, category #7, about the Telephone Conference Call platform’s ‘perceived’ problems to be simply not credible and ripe with incorrect statements and distortions. As a member of the Telephone Conference Call Committee, I felt a response was necessary to clean up the feculent nature of the initial posting.

To start, let me call attention to the initial approval of the Telephone Conference Call meetings as being “...deemed as approved Gamblers Anonymous meetings and will be listed on the Gamblers Anonymous website providing the meetings meet the criteria for a telephone conference call meeting, as set forth by the Telephone Conference Call Meeting Committee.” This was a committee-related agenda item (#77) that was passed by the Board of Trustees in Orlando of 2013. It is not a Guidance Code item, nor approved literature, and only requires 1 majority vote, which it received. It is memorialized in the official minutes of that meeting.

I’m having a bit of trouble reconciling the statement that if it is not in our literature or the Guidance Code then it is not part of GA. I would call attention to the GA approved literature called the “Information Packet”, which shows the Responsibilities for International Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous,” item #3, which states: “Uphold the Guidance Code and all decisions made by the Board of Trustees (not fulfilling this affects G.A. as a whole). So point 1 from last month’s posting is essentially all fabrications of something that doesn’t resemble facts. I suppose we could also put point 2 into the same status

The Conference Call meetings that are approved, were specifically NOT deemed as groups, for myriad reasons. Group conscience meetings are not possible, mostly because we don’t really know who is on any phone call. This prevents voting representation, a focused reason for not being called a GA approved group. Additionally, the Guidance Code requires that a group’s members ‘meet together’. The Conference Call meetings do not satisfy that

part of the Guidance Code. The Conference Call meetings cover the entire world with access to anyone. This precludes them from being covered by any area and certainly are not under the confines of any area or area Trustees.

There is also nothing set forth in any of our literature about how a GA meeting 'must' be run. That includes the Guidance Code and our GA approved literature. So let's put point 3 into the same made up set of unsubstantiated objections. A pattern is emerging, so it would seem.

The need for 5 members to be necessary for each meeting's initial structure is crucial to the success of the individual Conference Call meetings – to avoid burnout of the admins. People have lives other than putting in time with their usual physical meetings and then volunteering for the Conference Call meetings, which have up to now, generally been considered an extra meeting for many. We try to have a minimum of 3 admins on every meeting. One chairs the meeting, another acts as the time keeper and the third is there for redundancy in the event the chair's phone connection is lost. This person also acts to assist the Chair with various other background functions during the meetings.

One of the issues that made me shake my head with the statement that "Our GA clearly states that no room can be stricter than in the GC. Didn't we just have an Emergency meeting about this same thing?" What??? I recoiled against that statement because of a process in logic called "poisoning the well". It employs using false premises in an attempt to alter the conclusion. For that, it becomes necessary to articulate that the actual quote is from the Guidance Code, Article X, Section 5, Number 15, which has nothing to do with rooms, but rather Intergroups with Trustee elections: "An Intergroup does not have the right to set stricter requirements and responsibilities, pertaining to the election of Trustees, other than those which are contained in either the Guidance Code or the Responsibilities of International Trustees of Gamblers Anonymous, as listed in the Gamblers Anonymous Information Packet." The recent Quick Response Meeting dealt with exactly this matter. So, it looks like point 4 gets added into the growing heap of misinformation.

I'm glad the Zoom meeting platform was mentioned. It is an incredible platform, that brings an amazing level of technology into play. It is the perfect platform for conference calls for business – NOT for a Fellowship that is based on anonymity. These programs extract personal information from the callers by using their phone numbers and/or email addresses, across all social media sites. That information is or can be shared with others, without their direct consent. Once your information is out there, you are powerless to stop it from spreading. Oh, you think not? Try reading their Privacy Policy. Besides, Jack R. summed it all up as a response in last month's posting. The list of violations of anonymity is lengthy when using that platform. Aside from that, there is also the video options that immediately blows the user's anonymity, just because some people think that this is no different from FaceTime. It's somewhat ironic that as I write this posting, the NY State Attorney General is looking into the privacy issues of Zoom because of information breaches by hackers.

More statements that are false include that “ALL (telephone) meetings should be the same as physical meetings.” This cannot be realistically accomplished. Having to contrast the differences between and online platform would immeasurably lengthen my already lengthy posting. The absurdity of such a statement is self-evident.

Unfortunately, now I have to call out a statement as an unadulterated lie. “The BOR had spent \$4,000 and probably over, to have this in place.” When they say, you can’t make this stuff up, evidently, yes you can. The system is and has always been FREE. There is no cost borne by anyone, including the BOR or the Fellowship. Everyone who signs up for an account has no fees of any kind. The company doesn’t know anything about the platform being used by GA. Individual members sign up for the service. We do not get a “price break”, because there is no cost involved – period, the end. I will say that depending on the telephone plans callers have, there may be some charges to the callers’ accounts, but that is out of our hands.

In closing, I learned a long time ago, that just because you can do something, doesn’t make doing it a right decision. If people want to complain that the Telephone Conference Call Committee has not caught up with other Fellowships and is stuck in the 20th century, then I say let them complain. This is a deliberate action on the part of the committee. Protecting the anonymity of our callers actually is a priority, versus others who just want the glamour and glitz of new technology. The tirades of other members who insist on pushing their own agendas for what they think is right, and not getting their way should not lead to unsolicited diatribes of discrediting those who are protecting GA approved meetings and its members. Other meetings mentioned in last month’s posting have been excluded from being classified as GA approved meetings, for a multitude of reasons, such as recording meetings and posting them on the Internet for all to hear, not to mention other acts in previous year that forced Cease and Desist orders from the ISO. Everything for a reason. It just depends on sifting through the refuse to see what is really best for the Fellowship, not individuals who misquote chapter and verse to promote their “I can do whatever I want” agenda.

Now it’s time for me to prepare for the harpoons that will be hurled in my direction.

David M. – Telephone Conference Call Committee member – Trustee – Area 12 – New Jersey

2. Telephone Conference Calls on ISO Website

April 11, 2020 – 9:10am

In these trying times the members of Area 8A are attempting to stay connected to the fellowship via the phone meetings until such time as we can again gather in our rooms. I have been asked by several people why the information on how to connect with the approved meetings is not readily available on the ISO website .

I am asking for help or feedback on how to answer that question. I have directed members to the information found on the trustee Website.com page and most are unaware of that resource, and again ask why not on our ISO website www.gamblersanonymous.org?
Ernie N. – Trustee – Area 8A – Minnesota

April 11, 2020 – 10:50am

Ernie,

I too wish the meetings would be posted there, but I think that would require a vote and approval of the Board of Trustees, via an agenda item, maybe not.

The meetings listed on gamblersanonymous.org are for weekly meetings. The telephone conference meetings, while weekly, do not count towards the 39 meeting criteria and are not considered a group since there is no voting body or representation. I would imagine they are not being listed because they do not meet the criteria for being a group. I don't think there is anything in our written literature, short of possibly a BOT decision at a prior conference, that would prevent ISO from having this information made available. If this is the case, and nothing is preventing it, I would ask our Board of Regents, who oversee the ISO and therefore the gamblersanonymous.org website, to add a section for official teleconference meetings and have the information listed. Perhaps others can shed more light on why the original Wednesday teleconference meeting was never added and we can determine, from that, what we, as a board, need to do to get them added.

Mike R. – Trustee – Area 6A – North/Central Florida

April 11, 2020 – 9:50pm

Thanks Ernie and Mike for your postings about why the approved Telephone Conference Call Meetings are not on the ISO website. I was thinking the exact same thing myself, knowing that they are “approved GA meetings”. I decided to do some research, and looked back in our BOT minutes. I found what I was looking for, at the Orlando Trustee Meeting, held in October of 2013. There were (2) agenda items among many, that were specifically

directed towards the Telephone Conference Call platform. Agenda Items #77 and #78. Item #77 reads as follows:

“Telephone conference call meetings will be deemed as approved Gamblers Anonymous meetings and WILL BE LISTED ON THE GAMBLERS ANONYMOUS WEBSITE providing the meetings meet the criteria for a telephone conference call meeting, as set forth by the Telephone Conference Call Meeting Committee.”

This item PASSED, and was chaired by Andy R., who was the 1st Co-Chair at the time.

The 2nd agenda item was #78, which read as follows:

“Approve the guidelines as set forth by the Telephone Conference Call Committee.” – See Attachment.

This item also PASSED, and was chaired by Andy R., who was the 1st Co-Chair at the time.

The Telephone Conference Call Platform has been deemed as approved Gamblers Anonymous meetings, nearly 7 years ago. This was a decision made by the BOT and is in our minutes. Today, we have several Telephone Conference Call meetings per week, all of which should be listed on the ISO Website. It’s great that they are on the Trustee Website, but as an approved Gamblers Anonymous meeting, they belong on the ISO website. While this may have been an oversight, I would hope that the ISO would take the correct course of action and add them as soon as they can, just as they would add any other newly approved GA meeting.

Hope everyone is staying safe, miss you all.

Grateful to be a Compulsive Gambler

Steve F. – Telephone Conference Call Committee Member -1st Co-Chair, BOT

April 12, 2020 – 7:53pm

Ernie,

I can very much appreciate what you are saying. My last month’s Trusteeline item that GA is remarkably is still in the early 20th-century mentality.

About 15 years ago, one of my mentors told me that GA is one of the most secret societies in the world. It is so obscure that our members can not find out information when we need help.

This information for the so-called official phone meeting is so buried that prior some trustees could not even find where they could locate the LAWS that govern it. They would call me and ask. Very sad.

They can not put it on the GA main website cause when it got passed, it wasn't given any clout and not part of any GA guidance code or in any literature. It was buried where no one could find it. It was a very, very controlled phone meeting that at that time only had two people administrators.

One of GA's and the phone meeting's fear is a false sense of anonymity. This fear factor pretense of anonymity immediately, an important question I had bought up.

The truth is that they even claimed it in the LAW document that got it passed.

"Do I have to admit to either having a gambling problem, being a compulsive gambler, or having a desire to stop gambling?"

Telephone meeting conference calls are all open meetings, which means that anyone can attend, even those who have no connection to Gamblers Anonymous. However, in order to speak or give therapy, they must be a compulsive gambler or, in the absence of that, have a desire to stop gambling in conformance with Unity Step 3."

How could they tell if someone was a GA member versus a bookmaker or private detective?

Now, out of survival, the rooms started their ZOOM and other meetings, and they claim that it breaks anonymity, and their data can be used against them.

The new room meetings give the members more sense of their physical rooms than the OFFICAL GA PHONE MEETING. They can see and hear their friends and members, and the only people that get the information is from GA members.

I have a deep respect and understanding of one's anonymity. However, it is my right to announce that I am in a fellowship that has given back my life and self-respect. In short, I am very proud of my recovery, and for most of them, I talked to throughout the world feel the seem.

This fear factor has hidden GA society from the world and our members. Hopefully, out of something terrible, there will be this cloak of anonymity fear will be lifted, and we can come out of the 20th century?

I wish you the very best in your search and efforts.

Gary S. – Area 12 – New Jersey

3. Trustee Elections

April 21, 2020 – 4:34pm

Looking for ideas on how areas are conducting elections while most of our live meetings are currently suspended. It appears these suspensions may last for a number of months in some areas which would put us past July 1st. If any trustees are able to provide feedback on how your areas are handling trustee elections during the pandemic it would be appreciated.

Pat M. – Area 3D – Arizona

April 23, 2020 – 5:02pm

Since we are all in the same boat regarding trustee elections for the next term, can the Executive Board (or whoever makes this decision) extend the current terms of the current trustees until a future date? This would allow time for the various intergroups to come up with solutions for voting. We are considering using Zoom, but that would only work for hand votes. Our by-laws stipulate that trustee elections are closed ballot. We could have the voting members submit email ballots to the secretary as was suggested by someone earlier.

Stuart B. – Area 14 – New York

April 23, 2020 – 6:34pm

In my area, Area 13, Delaware Valley, Pa., our intergroup held a conference call intergroup meeting on Monday, April 20th. The agenda, which was sent out to about 160 members from all of our rooms, listed Trustee nominations under 'New Business'. We elect 3 Trustees for our area. Since only our current Trustees were nominated at the meeting, meaning they were un-opposed, we didn't need a secret ballot, so we voted to elect by acclamation. Hence, we're covered for the next two years.

Had a fourth member been nominated, we were prepared to have a vote by email and, if necessary, by phone. We would have sent a ballot to all eligible voters who had attended the April intergroup meeting, giving them 5 days to respond with their votes. Any eligible attendee without internet, would have been able to phone our Asst. Chairperson with their votes.

Marla J, Scott S, and myself look forward to seeing you all in San Diego.

Your friend in recovery,

John B, Trustee – Area 13 – Pennsylvania